

Message Text

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ACTION DLOS-09

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 FEA-01 ACDA-07 AGRE-00 AID-05

CEA-01 CEQ-01 CG-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00

DOT-00 EB-08 EPA-01 ERDA-05 FMC-01 TRSE-00 H-01

INR-07 INT-05 IO-13 JUSE-00 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

NSF-01 OES-06 OMB-01 PA-01 PM-04 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 /118 W

-----181019Z 120167 /12

P R 180925Z APR 77

FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7038

INFO AMEMBASSY SEOUL

C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 5585

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: JA, KS, PFOR

SUBJ: KOREAN CONTINENTAL SHELF AGREEMENT

REF: SEOUL 3022

SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH PROSPECTS FOR DIET RATIFICATION OF LONG-DELAYED KOREAN CONTINENTAL SHELF AGREEMENT HAVE IMPROVED SOMEWHAT DURING RECENT WEEKS, ITS PASSAGE IS NOT YET ASSURED AND TIME IS RUNNING OUT. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBOFF MET APRIL 15 WITH MASAMICHI HANABUSA, FONOFF OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE FOR LEGISLATIVE LIAISON ON KOREAN CONTINENTAL SHELF AGREEMENT. HANABUSA BELIEVED GOJ HAD SUFFICIENT VOTES FOR LOWER HOUSE PASSAGE -- COUNTING ON FULL SUPPORT OF LDP WITH LIKELY ASSISTANCE OF DSP. WHILE JSP AND JCP CONTINUED TO FIGHT AGREEMENT, KOMETO AND TO LESSER DEGREE NLC WERE MORE PRO FORMA IN THEIR OPPOSITION.

2. ACCORDING TO HANABUSA, BASIC PROBLEM FACING GOVERNMENT AS TIMING. AGREEMENT WAS NOW UNDER CONSIDERATION BY LOWER HOUSE FOREIGN

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AFFAIRS COMMITTEE. IF COMMITTEE AND SUBSEQUENTLY FULL LOWER HOUSE APPROVED AGREEMENT AND UPPER HOUSE DID NOT ACT WITHIN THIRTY DAYS, AGREEMENT WOULD RECEIVE AUTOMATIC RATIFICATION. IF, HOWEVER, AGREEMENT LEFT LOWER HOUSE WITH LESS THAN THIRTY DAYS REMAINING IN DIET SESSION, UPPER HOUSE MUST ACTUALLY DEBATE AND PASS ON AGREEMENT -- UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES, PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT BATTLE FOR AGREEMENT'S SUPPORTERS. AS CURRENT DIET SESSION IS SCHEDULED TO CONCLUDE

ON MAY 28, LATEST DATE FOR SUCCESSFUL LOWER HOUSE ACTION WOULD BE APRIL 28. HANABUSA NOTED SCHEDULE WAS TIGHT, BUT ASSERTED GOVERNMENT MIGHT JUST MAKE IT.

3. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, OPPOSITION TACTICS HAVE BEEN TO PROLONG DEBATE WITHIN FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE. LAST WEEK OPPOSITION BOYCOTTED DELIBERATIONS FOR SEVERAL DAYS UNTIL GOJ SUCCESSFULLY RESOLVED, THROUGH ENDO MISSION TO SEOUL (REFTEL), PROBLEM OF OVERLAP BETWEEN NEW JAPANESE TERRITORIAL WATERS AND AREA COVERED IN CONTINENTAL SHELF AGREEMENT. OPPOSITION, HANABUSA WENT ON, HAS BEEN AIDED BY TOKYO PRESS WHICH WAS CALLED FOR "EXTENSIVE DELIBERATIONS" ON CONTINENTAL SHELF AGREEMENT.

4. HANABUSA OBSERVED, HOWEVER, "CLIMATE OF OPINION" IN JAPAN HAD BEGUN TO SHIFT IN FAVOR OF CONTINENTAL SHELF AGREEMENT IN RECENT WEEKS. OPPOSITION ALLEGATIONS OF CORRUPT TIES BETWEEN ROK AND LDP HAD DIED DOWN WITHOUT ANY SIGNIFICANT CHARGES PROVEN. ENERGY WAS ONCE MORE MAJOR TOPIC OF INTEREST BECAUSE OF NUCLEAR REPROCESSING PROBLEM WITH US. BECAUSE OF DIFFICULT FISHING NEGOTIATIONS WITH SOVIETS, THERE WAS GREATER POPULAR CONCERN WITH PROTECTION OF "NATIONAL RESOURCES AND INTERESTS."

5. HANABUSA STRESSED THAT GOJ COULD NOT AFFORD TO CUT SHORT DEBATE AND OVERRIDE OPPOSITION IN LOWER HOUSE ON STRENGTH OF VOTES ALONE. SUCH "HIGH-HANDED" TACTICS WOULD BRING FORTH PREDICTABLE WAVE OF CRITICISM IN DIET AND PRESS, MIGHT ENDANGER DSP SUPPORT, AND COULD JEOPARDIZE NOT ONLY AGREEMENT BUT OTHER BILLS BEFORE DIET. FAVORABLE CLIMATE OF OPINION COULD BE RAPIDLY DISSIPATED. GOJ, HE CONCLUDED, MUST MOVE AGREEMENT FORWARD "CAREFULLY AND DELICATELY."
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6. HANABUSA EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT WHILE ROK APPEARED TO APPRECIATE POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES FACING LDP, SOUTH KOREANS MIGHT BE OVERLY OPTIMISTIC REGARDING CONTINENTAL SHELF AGREEMENT PROSPECTS IN DIET (IN SEPARATE CONVERSATION, FONOFF NE ASIA DEPDIR KAWASHIMA ECHOED HANABUSA' FEARS THAT SEOUL MIGHT UNDERESTIMATE GOJ'S PROBLEMS OF MOVING AGREEMENT THROUGH DIET).

8. COMMENT: OUR SOUNDINGS WITH VARIOUS DIET MEMBERS HAVE TENDED TO BEAR OUT HANABUSA'S ANALYSIS OF LEGISLATIVE SITUATION. ALTHOUGH ONE KOMEITO MEMBER OF LOWER HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE HAS TOLD US TREATY WILL MOST LIKELY BE APPROVED, IT WILL BE VERY CLOSE.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CONTINENTAL SHELF, AGREEMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 18-Apr-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977TOKYO05585
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770133-0951
Format: TEL
From: TOKYO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770445/aaaabmyc.tel
Line Count: 111
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
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Message ID: bc5c3aa3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION DLOS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 SEOUL 3022
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2770781
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: KOREAN CONTINENTAL SHELF AGREEMENT
TAGS: PFOR, PLOS, JA, KS
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/bc5c3aa3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009